

# POWER, CORRUPTION AND LIES

## The death of a tabloid tells it all

On Sunday 10th July the last edition of the *News of the World*, the long-standing popular Sunday tabloid, rolled off the presses after being unceremoniously closed down by its proprietor, the global media tycoon Rupert Murdoch, following revelations about the illegal phone hacking of crime victims, film stars and political figures, and various other criminal activities within the organisation.

Some 200 reporters and editors left the building having been given 90 days notice, saddened yet unapologetic about the role the paper had played over the years – a paper that glorified in salacious gossip, revealing the indiscretions of politicians, sports personalities and minor celebrities. It presented news in a startled, sanctimonious and reactionary way beloved of the right wing media. Its stock in trade was exposing the famous, often orchestrated by the paper itself, either taking drugs, offering sexual services or doing illegal deals in the gloom of anonymous hotel rooms. But beyond the filth and the fury *News of the World* was a massive propaganda machine on behalf of the ruling class. It reinforced bigoted racist and reactionary ideas and, along with its sister paper *The Sun*, it was a

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## LENS CAP CRASS LOVING ALIENS



You can't keep a good anarcho-punk band down. This year's crop of crop circles, widely believed to be the work of extra terrestrials trying to communicate with us, have appeared just before the summer solstice around the ancient sites of Stonehenge, and it seems our outer space chums love the sound of blaring guitars and searing anti-authority lyrics. A Crass crop circle? Sell outs!

## WAR RESISTER JAILED

The young navy medic who refused to pick up his rifle and train to use it has been sentenced to seven months detention for disobeying a lawful order. Leading Medical Assistant Michael Lyons joined the Royal Navy in 2005 as a medic and in 2010 he applied for a discharge as a conscientious objector, an application supported by his Commanding Officer, but was rejected. While his appeal was pending, he was sent on an advanced rifle training course as a pre-deployment training for Afghanistan.

Initially Lyons was prepared to serve in Afghanistan as a medic, under the Geneva Convention medics are non-combatants and are only allowed hand guns for self-defence and to protect their patients, but after researching the conditions in the war zone and hearing first hand testimony about the

casualties of the conflict being overwhelmingly civilians and children, he applied to be recognised a conscientious objector.

On the first day of the course he was given the order to 'draw a weapon and begin rifle training'. He refused, explaining that he was a conscientious objector and could not follow the order because of his ethical and moral beliefs.

At the court martial Lyons argued that the order to commence weapon training had been unlawful, as he was still appealing the rejection of his conscientious objection application, and he should have been assigned to non-combatant duties.

Despite his conviction Lyons unrepentant: "There haven't been many conscientious objectors in the navy but I'm proud of what I've done."

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## NEWS

### NEWS IN BRIEF

**COUNCILS:** As predicted in *Freedom* a few months ago, local authorities across the country are adopting a policy of sacking all its employees and rehiring them only if they agree to a pay cut. The latest is Tory controlled Shropshire who have sacked its 6,500 employees and agreed to re-employ them on a lower rate.

The process known as 'dismissal and re-engagement' was first introduced in Birmingham and now has set the template for all other councils to follow in cost-cutting measures.

**POLITICS:** For those who still think the Labour Party could somehow represent the interests of the working class again (if they ever did), another gem from the corridors of power.

West Ham Labour MP Lyn Brown wants to employ a researcher on an unpaid basis replacing a previous salaried worker. Ever the hypocrite, it was Brown who supported the call for "a living wage for all". She also claimed parliamentary expenses on a rented flat despite living less than 10 miles from Westminster.

**POLITICS (2):** The claim that the Tories are the party of the family is just as spurious as Labour claiming to be the party of the workers.

Further proof, if needed, comes from a new report by the Fawcett Society, which campaigns for equality between women and men, that shows that George Osborne's programme of tax rises and benefit cuts will mean lone female parents will lose an average of 8.5% of their income, couples with children will lose 6.5%, while childless couples will lose just 2.5% of their income by 2015.

**SURVEILLANCE:** The British government is ranked in the top four when it comes to snooping on its citizens, according to the biggest internet search engine Google. The website recently published its transparency report that revealed law enforcement officials and government agencies made 1,162 separate requests for data and personal information on internet users from the company in just six months. In terms of data per head of population only Singapore asked for private data on individuals more frequently than the UK.

**CORRUPTION:** More bent coppers are facing criminal proceedings for their actions.

Eight ex-police officers who fabricated evidence against three innocent men following the murder of prostitute Lynette White in Cardiff in 1988 are currently standing trial for perverting the course of justice. The three innocent men had to serve two years prison before being freed on appeal after fresh DNA evidence led to the real murderer. The trial involves at least two senior ranking officers and is expected to last at least eight months.

### LENS CAP CARRY ON CABBIE



Black taxi cab drivers having been staging go slow protests in Nottingham over the councils introduction of new parking regulations issuing fines to drivers who stop in places other than the approved taxi ranks. Cabbies have been snaking around the city centre in long processions to highlight the absurdity of 411 registered black cabs and only 201 bays. Looks like we've got ourselves a convoy.

## Police free to kill

Friends and family of Kingsley Burrell, a 29 year old father who recently died in suspicious circumstances while in the custody of the police, gathered in Birmingham city centre on Saturday 2nd July and marched with a crowd of over 1,000 people to West Midlands police headquarters (pictured below) in an angry protest calling for justice and to demand the police be held accountable, once again, for their lethal actions.

Mr Burrell was arrested by officers after an 'incident' in Icknield Port Road, Ladywood, at around 1.30pm on Sunday 27th March. He was detained under the Mental Health Act and held at the Mary Seacole Mental Health Unit, where it's reported he suffered a "serious medical condition" and after officers were called he was transferred to the mental health facility at Queen Elizabeth Hospital where he died the following day on Thursday 31st March.

The cause of death has yet to be established and so far no other details have been released by the police about the incident. The family say Burrell had no previous history of mental health issues and in fact it was he who initially called the police for help after he feared for his safety from a gang who were intimidating him and his five-year-old son. The family

were deprived of contact with Burrell while he was held in detention and say he was beaten twice by police once on the way to the mental health unit in front of his son and then, crucially, when he was being transferred to the hospital unit. He had severe injuries and was put on a life support machine before dying of as yet unknown causes.

There has been a recent spate of deaths in police custody. The most widely reported is that of Smiley Culture, a music star from the 1980s who apparently stabbed himself to death in his own kitchen while police were in attendance to arrest him. There were no other witnesses to the incident apart from police. The was also the case of Demetre Fraser who died in the custody of West Midlands police some days following the death of Kingsley Burrell. He was residing in Birmingham as part of his bail conditions for assaulting his girlfriend, who later withdrew the charge. West Midlands Police visited Demetre for what should have been a simple routine tag check. The official version of events is that he committed suicide by jumping from the eleventh floor of the high-rise block where he was staying temporarily. Again there were no independent witnesses to the incident.

According to figures by the campaign group Inquest, there has been 937 deaths in police custody since 1990, and despite many inquests returning a verdict of unlawful killing not one police has ever been successfully prosecuted for causing their deaths.







Left, Rupert Murdoch and Rebekah Brooks meet for crisis talks; right, the last issue comes off the press.

# A Wapping goodbye

## Local anarchists on the end of the News of the World

Anarchists have a complex, sometimes incoherent approach to the media. While much discussion since the student movement last year has focussed on the role of 'violence' in securing press coverage, truth be told we couldn't care less what they publish about us. Smug, careerist liberal shits will happily tell you how successful the non-violent actions on June 30th were in capturing the media's attention. How anyone could count "DEFY THE STRIKE BULLIES" as a win is beyond us, but more importantly they have failed to captivate anyone's imagination. Ultimately, our goal as Anarchists remains the complete and utter replacement of the mainstream press, and with the emergence of increasingly sophisticated forms of social media this seems more realistic now than ever in the past.

Because we regard both the liberal and right-wing press in a similar light, and because the former often fails spectacularly in appealing to our sense of humour and fun, some of us even had a strange fascination with the low-brow tabloid institutions with which we are all familiar. The *Standard* always gets a read and Fox News is great for a laugh. 'Hospitalised copper' certainly represented a détournement of the *Sun*'s page 3, but then again *Class War* didn't pick a broadsheet format. And frankly, if you offered me a copy of the *Sun* or the *Independent* I'm not sure which I would choose – more entertaining to sit back and watch as the media machine reaches unprecedented new heights of perversity.

This time, however, it seems like Murdoch may have well and truly overstepped the line with actions that are beyond obscene. As of this writing, numerous reports are coming in that many if not most of the companies which provide advertising revenue to News International are now either reviewing or

withdrawing their support. Sure. Papers like *News of the World* have been profiting off of other people's misery for years, and all it took was the impossibly disrespectful invasion of a murder victim's privacy for sponsors to decide that maybe they don't want to be associated with this. So the decision is made from the other end of London – if not the planet – to sever ties.

For those of us in Tower Hamlets, however, the fact that their offices are located right in our own backyard is an insult of incredible proportions. Over the years, Murdoch and Co have shown that they have nothing but contempt for migrant communities and ethnic minorities, benefit recipients, the working class, and generally the sort of people which have made this area what it is today.

On Friday 8th July, members of ALARM set out for the Wapping plant, some of whom were old enough to remember when it first opened. This time around, we still want a news of the world which is owned and

## Power, corruption and lies

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bastion of ruling class ideology sieved through the frivolous dazzle of Fleet Street gossip.

The *News of the World* represented the public face of an institutional power. It's not by accident that the press is defined historically as the fourth estate (after the church, the state, and the people), but it is the three modern examples of institutional power – the Murdoch empire, government ministers, more specifically David Cameron, and the Met police – that have been caught colluding together in reinforcing their positions of political influence.

What isn't disputed is that the ex-editor of the *News of the World*, and now the chief executive of Murdoch's News International, Rebekah Brooks is a personal friend of David

Cameron and his wife. What isn't disputed is that Andy Coulson, ex-editor of *News of the World*, became David Cameron's director of communications when the Tory leader took power. What isn't disputed is that the Tory government are in the process of authorising Murdoch's complete takeover of BskyB, giving News International the monopoly on pay-for-view broadcasting in this country. What isn't in dispute is that the *News of the World* paid police for privileged information with the full knowledge and consent of Brooks and Coulson, and that high ranking officers within the Met covered up any investigation to the activity and sat on incriminating evidence.

The real story lies in laying bare the relationship between the press, and the police and prime minister. These aren't simply marriages of convenience but endemic features of how the political elite organise and protect themselves.

Regardless of any more revelations to come, what remains transparent is that those in power operate outside the conditions of public consent. Speculation about the future of Murdoch's empire is rife but the day-to-day concerns of ordinary people remain unchanged. With a government in crisis, a police force without credibility and one of the key 'manufacturers of consent' in turmoil, now is the time we start looking to go on the political offensive.

## ANALYSIS

# Comrades jailed

**Seven protestors have been jailed in the last couple of weeks in London and it is likely that more will follow soon**

Obviously they deserve our support and also we must do everything possible to avoid others being imprisoned.

## Welling

On 28th March 2009 a number of people travelled to Welling in south-east London to protest against a Blood & Honour gig at the Duchess of Edinburgh Pub. On their way back there was a fight between some of the protestors and fascists on the platform of Welling train station. This led to 23 people being arrested in total and 22 charged with conspiracy to commit Violent Disorder. This was too many to fit into one court room so the case was split in two, with the first 11 people going to trial on 6th June. Just in case you're wondering whether there were any problems having fascists and anti-fascists on trial together, don't worry! None of the fascists were arrested or charged.

On Tuesday 28th June, on the 17th day of the trial and after 13 hours of deliberation, the Jury returned verdicts. Four people were convicted by eleven-to-one majority and three by ten-to-two. Four were sentenced immediately to 21 months, three are awaiting reports, two are on remand and one is on bail and will be sentenced in August.

Four people have been acquitted and we wish them all the best in suing the police which they mightily deserve not only for having the worry of a court case hanging over them for more than two years but also in one case being unable to work as a nurse because of comments by the police on his criminal record check.

The second trial will start on 12th September. Obviously this means we cannot



comment in detail on the evidence or the consequences for anti-fascist protests and the wider issue of conspiracy just yet.

## March 26th

Francis Fernie was jailed for 12 months at Kingston Crown Court for Violent Disorder on the 7th July. He is only the second person to be sentenced for section 2 of the public order act out of over 30 charged from the student protests and March 26th demo. When Edward Wollard was sentenced to 32 Months on 11th January for dropping a fire extinguisher from the roof of Millbank, we warned (*Freedom* issue 7202, 29th January, page 11, '32 reasons not to plead guilty') that a guilty plea would not enable people to avoid imprisonment for violent disorder however trivial the circumstances. Francis threw two sticks on the 26th March causing no damage or injury. When his photo was put out he handed himself in and made a full confession in interview. He had no previous convictions and, having just finished his A-levels, was working with learning impaired adults prior to taking up a place at university this autumn. Judge Nicholas Price noted all this and said he was giving a much lighter sentence than he was originally thinking of, but quoted Lord Justice Thomas in the case of Alhaddad (appeals against sentence from the Gaza demonstrations in 2008/9). He said "In our judgment, anyone who engages in violence of this kind must go into custody. They cannot be dealt with by community sentences. The protection of the public and of the police demands that the serious offence of violent disorder on this scale, to which each pleaded guilty, is marked by a custodial sentence. The length of custodial

sentences will, of course, depend upon a clear and close analysis of the events in question and the activity and individual circumstances of each defendant. As we have endeavoured to set out in this case, political motivation can play no part." From this we think that the 'starting point' for Millbank, 9th December and 26th March will be similar to the Gaza 10th January 2009 demonstration, i.e two years three months for participants who came to protest peacefully but were 'caught up' in the events of the day.

## Stop press

Rhys Gray received a eight-week curfew on a tag and has to pay £2,400 compensation for criminal damage to a set of traffic lights and a window in Parliament Square on 9th December.

Of the 34 people who were arrested on the London demonstration of 30th June, 18 have been charged with various offences. Good luck to all of them. Possessing items with intent to cause criminal damage is potentially a very serious charge carrying a 10 year maximum, but we don't think the art student allegedly with a paint filled water pistol should be packing her toothbrush just yet.

**Legal Defence and Monitoring Group**

## Prisoners

All currently held at HMP Wormwood Scrubs, PO Box 757, Du Cane Road, London W12 0AE.

- Andy Baker A5728CE
- Thomas Blak A5728CE
- Sean Cregan A5769CE
- Phil De Souza A5766CE
- Ravinder Gill A5770CE
- Austin Jackson A5729CE





## NEWS IN BRIEF

**CRIME:** Convicted criminal Paul White, better known as Lord Harrington, who is currently serving a nine month prison sentence after being found guilty of illegally claiming £13,379 in parliamentary expenses, is still receiving his allowance of £11,500 as county councillor despite not being able to represent his Essex constituents due to being banged up. Who says it's one law for them...

**ROYALTY:** The Queen, not wanting to be seen to be out of step with the rest of population, has embraced the government's austerity measures with gusto cutting back on 'non essentials' to the royal household. One 'non-essential' it seems are staff wages with the introduction of a pay freeze for all royal employees. At the same time the government has given over a greater slice of the profits of the Crown Estate to the Queen's personal fortune. God bless you ma'am.

**RAIL:** Steve Hedley, RMT London regional organiser and occasional *Freedom* contributor won his court appeal against his conviction for assaulting a scab manager at a tube station during a strike. Despite three independent witnesses corroborating Steve's version of events and no witnesses against, the judge convicted the trade union militant in the lower courts. On appeal however the conviction was overturned and the case thrown out, in no small part to the police not submitting vital CCTV footage evidence to the courts.

**FOOTBALL:** A Crystal Palace fan has spoken out about being attacked by police for simply being a football fan. Tommy Meyers was handcuffed and held on the ground at Reading train station while a police dog was set on him, causing severe injuries. The medical student was asked what he thought of the police: "They're cruel, inhumane, barbaric and brutal. The only trouble I witnessed that day was caused by the bullying police thugs who think they can do what they want and get away with it."

**INTERNATIONAL BRIGADES:** Records revealing the full extent of British involvement in the Spanish Civil War have been made public for the first time to mark the 75th anniversary of the outbreak of the war. They show that more volunteers than previously thought, almost double, left Britain to join the International Brigades fighting in Spain. Thousands of men and women were inspired by their political beliefs to defend the Second Spanish Republic against a military uprising. It names more than 4,000 volunteers who left Britain for the frontline in Spain as well as a roll of honour of those killed in action. They were among the first of their generation to take up arms in the fight against Fascism.

# Obituary

## Bob Miller 1953-2011

Over the last few years I have penned a number of biographies and obituaries of anarchist militants. One of the most poignant of these was a piece I had to write on the Spanish militant Luis Andres Edo whom I had known personally whilst living in Paris in the early 1970s. But nothing compares to the painful task of writing this remembrance of a comrade I have known for forty years.

I first met Bob Miller in 1973 or 1974. He participated in a libertarian communist group within the Socialist Party of Great Britain. This group contacted the London group of the Organisation of Revolutionary Anarchists of which I was a member and we began to have discussions. They had wanted to orient the Party more to the workers' and social struggles that were in full swing at this time. Just after the 1972 SPGB conference they began publishing a magazine called *Libertarian Communism* and ORA comrades gave some support in terms of resources, I seem to remember. People outside the Party contributed to the magazine. They and other SPGB members were expelled or left in support not long after. I remember Bob coming round to the North London flat I shared with two other ORA members for discussions, always lively and sometimes heated, and in retrospect I have to admit Bob was more accurate on some of the finer points of analysis than we were!

The expelled group linked up with other SPGB dissidents who had been expelled at the same time and eventually a group emerged called Social Revolution. We organised joint day schools with them and with Solidarity at the Centro Iberico in North London, and there were high expectations of a merger between ORA and Social Revolution. However this was not to be and Social Revolution then completed a merger with the libertarian socialist organisation Solidarity. I lost track

of Bob and his comrades after that. He and they passed through Solidarity and then were involved in the founding of the Wildcat group and then of the Subversion group which produced a journal of the same name.

In February 1988 I was handing out a leaflet produced by the Anarchist Communist Federation aimed at the large demonstration in Manchester called to combat Section 28 (a significant attack by the Thatcher government on gay people). Bob was at the demo with the Subversion comrades and they liked our leaflet. Contact was established and we got around to organising a series of joint day schools around the country. With the demise of Subversion Bob joined the ACF in 1998 with a couple of other ex-members of Subversion and we began to work closely over the next decade.

Bob was an enthusiast of cheap pamphlets and he was instrumental in developing a whole range of Anarchist Federation pamphlets. In addition he was a dynamic activist within the Manchester AF group and was involved in many local activities. The testimony of many who were influenced by Bob over the years can be found on internet boards like Urban 75 and libcom and they stand as a fine tribute to both his influence and importance.

Bob had many fine qualities, chief of which were his generosity and hospitality and his desire to make libertarian communist ideas accessible; he was always welcoming to new comrades, he was almost always reasonable and always attempted to act in a non-sectarian way to other libertarians, and he rarely lost his temper during political encounters. He and I sometimes had disagreements, but they were like the quarrels of brothers, and I always had great respect and admiration for his political longevity and his continuing optimism about social change.

He is a great loss to the Anarchist Federation and to the movement in general. I miss him very much.

Nick Heath

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## INTERNATIONAL

### NEWS IN BRIEF

**CANADA:** Prince William and Kate Middleton were on the receiving end of popular opinion as they toured the 'Commonwealth'. No sooner had they arrived in Montréal on an official visit than they were met with an angry protest. Demonstrators held up placards denouncing the couple as 'parasites' and hecklers invited the pair to go home. Other protests in Québec followed, where the Royals have not returned since protesters booed the Queen and turned their backs on her in 1964.

**CZECH REPUBLIC:** Antifa and Romany groups joined forces in Prerov to confront fascists who met in the town for a provocative demonstration against the gypsy minority population. Some 200 nationalists attended a rally and march organised by the far-right Workers' Party of Social Justice (DSSS), intended to stir up racial tensions in the area. Antifa groups mobilised to oppose the fascist party who have been linked to the fire-bombing of a Roma family home in Vítkov. Prerov was the scene of violent street clashes between extremists and Roma in April 2009.

**EGYPT:** There were riots on the streets of Cairo as a judge ordered the release of 10 police officers who have been charged with killing protesters during the country's uprising. Angry mobs burned police cars and attacked government buildings as tensions increase over the handling of the legal proceedings. More than 845 people were killed by government forces during the massive social uprising against the state at the beginning of the year, but so far only one policeman has been convicted for using deadly violence.

**GREECE:** Members of Greece's anti-riot squad purchased more than 900,000 Euros worth of tear gas canisters and chemical grenades the day after the massive anti-austerity protests. Tear gas became the weapon of choice by the police to control crowds during the mass rally in Syntagma Square, opposite the parliament building in Athens. Police used more than 2,200 tear gas canisters and stun grenades during the demonstration. The new order of noxious chemicals is said to include some 10,000 items.

**ICELAND:** Former punk, comedian and anarchist Jón Gnarr – who is as happy quoting Crass as he is Bakunin – has become the unlikely mayor of Reykjavík. The comedy actor formed a political party with former Sugarcubes musician Einar called the Best Party which managed to win the 2010 municipal elections in Reykjavík gaining six out of 15 seats on the City Council. What started as a parody of Icelandic politics (their manifesto included free towels in all swimming pools, a polar bear for Reykjavík zoo, all kinds of things for weaklings) has become a full time job.

### LENS CAP DUTCH COURAGE



Police in Amsterdam went on the rampage closing down squats, including anarchist and political social centres, in a sweep of the city enforcing the recent harsh anti-squatting laws. They were met with fierce resistance from the Schijnheilig political centre near Leidseplein, where a prolonged stand-off between riot police and squatters ended with over 120 arrests.

## 'This is the people's resistance'

The NO TAV movement in Italy is still raging after a week of intense fighting between police and protesters over the high speed rail link through the mountain regions of northern Italy. On 26th June protests were organised by NO TAV (No to the High Speed Train), a movement based in the Susa Valley in Piedmont that opposes the creation of the new high speed trans-Europe railway line. The line is part of an EU backed project that will directly link the Ukraine with France and has seen the transfer of public money to a consortium of private companies including FIAT and Benetton and others who after construction, would be allowed to set up and run their own private rail service in competition with the state railways.

During a crowded torchlight march in the early hours of 27th June over 2,000 police attacked the demonstration using tear gas and water cannons, destroying the makeshift camp and assaulting anybody in the area. In the

nearby town of Venaria, a riot police vehicle on its way to the site ran over and killed an elderly woman 'by mistake'. The response from locals and activists was to get out on the streets again on a nationally organised demonstration on 3rd July. This time locals came prepared and it is understood over 200 police were injured in the confrontations that took place.

At a press conference the following Monday organisers remained defiant "It wasn't the Black Block; it was just people, and the majority of them locals. We came prepared with helmets and masks after what happened on the 27th June, but we came with bare hands. After the police started attacking us with teargas, stones and water jets, we defended ourselves in any way we could. We couldn't do anything else"

The protest camp remains and there is talk of setting up an international camp in August.

## Notes from the US

American public life seems at times to be built on a series of facts – none of which is true!

Take Minnesota congresswoman Michele Bachmann's recently announced candidacy for the Republican 2012 presidential nomination. Not only did she commit several gaffes on television in the days before her much-heralded announcement, mis-stating historical facts (for example, that the country's Founding Fathers fought hard to end slavery). But her platform is also constructed on the dogma of the Christian right... she advises that, if

elected, she will insist that creationism be taught in schools; she vigorously opposes abortion. For this leading politician, as the country experiences some of the most severe weather in living memory, climate change is a hoax.

Her part of the country is not unfamiliar with such piercing intellect, though: in late June Wisconsin became the latest state to ban funding for the group Planned Parenthood and its nine clinics state-wide. Never out of



# Greetings from Mayo!

## Rosspport gears up for the next big fight against Shell

The farming community of Rosspport, County Mayo, has put together a calendar of events and action as they continue to fight the might of oil giants Shell who want to build a gas pipeline through their community. Residents of the small farming village on the west coast of Ireland have been battling Shell who have been given the rights by the Irish government to lay a high pressure, odourless, raw gas pipeline straight from the Corrib gas field through the village and across farmland. Its construction will have a monumental impact on the environment as well as dangerous health and safety risks for the local community. This is an experimental project by Shell which has never been tried before anywhere in the world, and even their own analysis reports admit there is a real risk of leakage of toxic substances, polluting the land and, being odourless and undetectable in the air, poisoning the local population, as well as a risk of combustion and outbreaks of fire. In a corrupt deal the Irish government gave permission for the construction to go ahead without any proper consultation and without informing local residents, who unanimously opposed the proposition. Despite this, land was purchased to facilitate the pipeline's construction to the inland refinery.

The Shell to Sea campaign against the pipeline has been ongoing now for more than five years, developing into an international campaign, and a permanent protest camp. At the invitation of the local community, the Rosspport Solidarity Camp was set up in June 2005 and played a big role in supporting the



local community in their fight against Shell. The camp infrastructure is set up seasonally at strategic points of opposition to Shell, and is run on the principles of non-hierarchical organisation, collective decision making and individual accountability, with a disciplined work ethic. It has attracted many hundreds of activists, environmentalists and anarchists over the years, many who continue to be actively involved including Workers Solidarity Movement.

This July Rosspport Solidarity Camp is gearing up for a summer of intense activity on the expectation that Shell will be implementing its next stage of construction. There will be a massive day of action when work resumes on the pipeline, which aims to frustrate, disrupt and stop Shell as much as possible with continuous daily protests.

After that there will be a monthly Day of Action until they have successfully halted the plans.

As one local put it: "Shell's Corrib Gas Project is already a decade late and three times over budget – impressive for a rural community fighting one of the biggest multinationals in the world!"

*Freedom* will keep its readers informed of the dates of the actions. The next direct action training is on 23rd July, which will be held at the camp and various other places across Ireland. Anarchists and radicals worldwide are encouraged to visit and get involved.

Contact [rossportsolidaritycamp@gmail.com](mailto:rossportsolidaritycamp@gmail.com) or phone 0851141170.

Camp website: <http://www.rossportsolidaritycamp.org/>  
Campaign website: <http://www.shelltosea.com/>

## Notes from the US

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the headlines for long for his anti-union, anti-justice antics, Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker approved the cuts – ostensibly as part of a bill slashing public spending. Other states seeking to take the same reactionary steps now include Nebraska, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Oklahoma and North Carolina. A federal judge in Indiana, though, has issued an injunction against a state law there that would block Planned Parenthood from taking part in Medicaid. Then earlier in June a conservative member of the Wisconsin state Supreme Court (Justice David Prosser) apparently tried physically to choke a fellow justice (Ann Walsh Bradley) during an argument.

### Libya

As evidence emerged in the last week of June suggesting that some of the stories of atrocities by the Libyan élite which were used as an excuse for the recent war on that country

are either exaggerated and/or fabricated, it also became obvious that Obama rejected the views of senior lawyers at the Pentagon and the Department of Justice when he decided that he had the legal authority to continue his aggression without congressional authorisation after 60 days... under the War Powers Act of 1973, Obama should have terminated or scaled back the mission after 20th May. Congressperson Mike Turner (Ohio) meanwhile revealed that NATO commander US Admiral Samuel Locklear has confirmed to him that the United States and NATO forces are actively trying to assassinate Libyan leader Col Muammar Gaddafi in defiance of the United Nations authorisation. Still that's not really what it's about: a group of American drilling companies that includes Halliburton stands to make tens of billions of dollars in Iraq under new oil deals.

Louis Further

## Israel an 'apartheid' state

An official complaint to the South Africa's Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) by the South African Jewish Board of Deputies that a radio advert calling for a boycott of Israel and comparing Israel to Apartheid South Africa is "untrue, not supported by any evidence... and contains a lie which amounts to false propaganda" was dismissed by ASA who found in favour of the SA Artists Against Apartheid who made the advert.

The ASA noted that extensive evidence was submitted in favour of the case including "reports by a UN Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territories as well as a copy of the International Court of Justice [ruling] concerning the [Israeli Separation] wall in Jerusalem". Another submission was the 2009 South African government Human Sciences Research Council report that found Israel guilty of the crime of apartheid.

## FEATURE

# Peter Kropotkin and Radical En

## Part one of a two part article examining Kropotkin's influence of the ecological movement

Next to Mikhail Bakunin, Peter Kropotkin is the most famous and important of anarchist theorists, and was one of the first to advocate the theory known as Anarchist Communism. His lifelong love of science and nature led him to develop his political theory which he saw as the most sensible, and perhaps more importantly, the most natural form of social and political organisation. In developing what he thought to be the most natural means of human organisation, in terms of studying human needs and the most rational and equitable means of satisfying them, he laid out some of the basic ideas that would later be developed into the philosophy of Social Ecology, as well as other schools of ecological thought.

I will try to demonstrate how the tactics that Kropotkin developed in his time working within the anarchist movement have come to be used by radical environmental groups, often called 'eco-terrorists.' Apart from detailing the tactical methods which eco-terrorist groups have inherited from Kropotkin, I will also attempt to show how Kropotkin's philosophical writings on anarchism and evolutionary theory have come to be incredibly influential within the environmental community. In doing this I hope to show the theoretical framework that eco-terrorist groups are working in, because I believe it is essential to understand the development of these theories into the modern period as a way of both understanding, and addressing the issues we face as a global community today.

To begin, however, we must start by laying out some of the concepts that went into Kropotkin's thinking in order to grasp a better understanding of his overall philosophy. Firstly, there is the influence that nihilism had upon him. Kropotkin wrote of the nihilists: "The life of civilised people is full of little conventional lies. Persons who hate each other, meeting in the street, make their faces radiant with a happy smile; the nihilist remained unmoved, and smiled only for those whom he was really glad to meet."<sup>1</sup>

The first sentence of this quote alone describes perfectly the nihilist view of society: whatever is accepted, reject; a perfect recipe for a rebel such as Kropotkin. It also, however, shows an incredible display of honesty. A nihilist would say one should not sugar coat something simply because it is the societal norm to do so. One should instead do it because one generally feels that that is the appropriate action to take. This level of honesty can also be seen in examples of Kropotkin's life, as even his harshest critics could not deny the amount of honesty and

gratitude that he radiated.

This break from traditions and norms are a critical aspect of modern anarchist thought. The anarchist conception of freedom is very heavily situated upon radical notions of individualism that does not "bend before any authority except that of reason,"<sup>2</sup> and nihilism also views life as ultimately meaningless, without a higher purpose or meaning to life. If one were then to hold a nihilistic conception of the world, things such as societal norms and traditions, as well as religious doctrines would lose much of their relevance.

Another conceptual aspect of Kropotkin's thinking is that of our natural ability as humans to rebel. Kropotkin's fellow Russian anarchist Mikhail Bakunin writes: "Yes, our first ancestors, our Adams and our Eves, were, if not gorillas, very near relatives of gorillas, omnivorous, intelligent and ferocious beasts, endowed in a higher degree than the animals of any other species with two precious faculties – the power to think and the desire to rebel."<sup>3</sup>

In this quote, Bakunin reveals elements that would become absolutely paramount in Kropotkin's thinking, and the theories he develops: the concept of evolution (of which more will be said shortly), and combining our natural capacities for intellect with our natural desire to rebel. In Bakunin's view, humans are essentially animals. We are not some entity distinct or outside of nature, but instead we are in nature. We make up one portion of the ecosystem, and while Bakunin was not thinking as complex about this issue, Kropotkin develops it further, and the environmentalist groups that will be discussed later will grab a hold of this as a central theme in their respective philosophies.

For Bakunin and Kropotkin then, rebellion is something that comes as naturally to us as a species as breathing and thinking. Or, better yet, our natural capacity for rebellion – which is for Bakunin and Kropotkin the rebellion towards freedom – is the evolutionary product of our natural capacity for thinking. We naturally want to rebel against the status quo towards complete freedom, which for Bakunin and Kropotkin is anarchism.

This natural tendency of rebellion towards freedom obviously implies a very progressive view of history. Kropotkin, however, would extend this to claim that every occurrence in nature is naturally a progressive occurrence, such as is found in dialectical materialism. Let me explain: sixty-five million years ago, an asteroid crashed just off the coast of the Yucatan Peninsula of modern day Mexico. This event heralded the end of the dinosaurs, as well as seventy percent of all the life forms on earth at the time. So, as cataclysmic as this event was, it provided for the conditions necessary for mammals to



evolve, and now here you are with a paper in your hands reading about it. Kropotkin saw revolutions in just the same way: a possibly violent event which ultimately would bring about some sort of progress. This shows the very dialectical way of thinking which guided Kropotkin throughout his life.

One last critical aspect of Kropotkin's thought, before we move on to his political theory, is the theory of evolution. Kropotkin wrote a work, *Mutual Aid: a Factor of Evolution*, and in the work he states: "Mutual Aid would be considered, not only as an argument in favour of a pre-human origin of moral instincts, but also as a law of Nature and a factor of evolution."<sup>4</sup> This mention of mutual aid being the fundamental factor of moral instincts is crucial to Kropotkin's ethical and practical arguments for anarchism. In a political pamphlet published in 1909, entitled *Anarchist Morality*, Kropotkin asserts: "The feeling of solidarity is the leading characteristic of all animals living in society."<sup>5</sup> He goes on to say: "Thousands of similar facts might be quoted, whole books might be written, to show how identical are the conceptions of



# Environmentalism



good and evil amongst men and the other animals.”<sup>6</sup>

George Woodcock writes in an introduction to the Kropotkin anthology, *Evolution and Environment*: “Kropotkin considered that the application of evolutionary theories to the development of human societies provided a basis in reality as well as in science for his ideal of a liberated society.”<sup>7</sup> This view that science and technology can play a prominent role in liberating society is a concept that will be returned to with the introduction of Murray Bookchin and his theory of Social Ecology, but for now we move to his political theory.

Kropotkin writes of anarchist communism as “a synthesis of the two chief aims pursued by humanity since the dawn of its history – economic freedom and political freedom.”<sup>8</sup> He goes on to claim: “We are communists. But our communism is not that of the authoritarian school: it is anarchist communism, communism without government, free communism.”<sup>9</sup>

Kropotkin’s work, *Mutual Aid*, is critical for understanding why he felt humans could carry out this type of society. In Kropotkin’s

view, humans are animals, ultimately no different than any other on the planet, and given his argument for mutual aid in the evolutionary process; he argues that, if given the chance, humans would naturally order society in this way. So, it is in fact unnatural, in Kropotkin’s view, for humans to subjugate one another and instead are capable of incredible amounts of empathy and aid.

Given Marx’s claim that history has been one of class struggles, where one class utilises the state apparatus to oppress opposing classes, Kropotkin argues that if humans are ever able to take control of the means of production, they will have no need for the state. Here, Kropotkin and other anarchists differ from Marxists in one crucial aspect: tactics. Marxists believe the state should be seized in the revolution and utilised to bring about communism, and anarchists believe it should be destroyed in the very process of the revolution. The goal is the same but the strategies are vastly different.

I have attempted to elucidate briefly the theoretical aspects of Kropotkin’s thinking, and next issue I will illustrate how radical environmental groups have been influenced

by these ideas. For a more complete view of his ideas I would strongly suggest delving into his body of works on the subject such as: *The Conquest of Bread, Fields, Factories, and Workshops*, *Mutual Aid: a Factor of Evolution*, as well as the anthology *Anarchism: A Collection of Revolutionary Writings*.

Trent Trepanier

## Footnotes

- 1 Peter Kropotkin, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, page 298.
- 2 Ibid. page 297.
- 3 Mikhail Bakunin, *God and the State*, page 9.
- 4 Peter Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: a Factor in Evolution*, page 4.
- 5 Peter Kropotkin, *Anarchism: a Collection of Revolutionary Writings*, page 95. Quoted from *Anarchist Morality*.
- 6 Ibid. page 90.
- 7 Peter Kropotkin, *Evolution and Environment*, page 12.
- 8 Peter Kropotkin, *Anarchism: a Collection of Revolutionary Writings*, page 61. Quoted from *Anarchist Communism*.
- 9 Ibid, page 61.



## COMMENT

## ABOUT FREEDOM

## ANGEL ALLEY

While we are by no means despondent there has been a subdued air with several of our comrades and friends jailed over the last couple of weeks. The eviction of our near neighbours the Offmarket social centre on 7th July is also lamentable as they did a great job promoting radical politics in Hackney. Hopefully they will be up and running with a new venue very soon.

Meantime Angel Alley continues to be a hive of activity with meetings most nights and a vibrant art launch last Thursday. Events coming up include a performance from singer songwriter Cosmo on Saturday 23rd July at 2pm, hope you can make it. Some comrades will have noticed changes to the product side of the website which we hope will make it easier to purchase stuff. So be quick! One day we may run out of copies of the *Raven*.

On the strategic development front a group of us have been looking at the future of the paper and ways to improve circulation. More on this in our next issue, but we can say now that there will be a meeting at the London Anarchist Bookfair to discuss the role of *Freedom* within the movement.

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

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## NEXT ISSUE

The next issue will be dated 30th July 2011 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 21st July. You can send your articles to us by email to [copy@freedompress.org.uk](mailto:copy@freedompress.org.uk) or by post addressed to 'The Editors', Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

## A sideways look

by SVARTFROSK

About twenty five years ago, Hooligan Press put out a pamphlet called *Written in Flames*, its subtitle was *We name the British Ruling Class*. In the years since, the idea of industrialists and financiers living among us pulling the strings has been stretched by globalisation, such that a large local employer will respond to movements on Wall Street more than the streets outside their plant.

Some people have even suggested there is no such thing as a British ruling class any more, that it is a global phenomenon. The events at News International have shown that it is not as far gone as we might have supposed, and, unusually, we can see cracks among the British ruling class.

Rupert Murdoch has been a figure of hate for the left since his full-on support for Thatcher, culminating in Wapping and the smashing of the print unions. No British politician with any realistic hope of power has dared to challenge him. His family are surrounded by people from the world of politics. New Labour fixer Peter Mandelson is good friends with Elizabeth Murdoch. Her husband Matthew Freud is friends with both Cameron and Osborne. Cameron goes horse-riding with Rebekah Brooks, chief executive of News International and former editor of the *News of the World*. Blair's closest aide, Anji Hunter, is married to Adam Boulton, Sky's chief political correspondent. If there is a British ruling class, as opposed to a global one, the Murdochs are at the centre of it. Murdoch has never publicly backed the losing side in a general election.

It is likely that the story of the fall of the *News of the World* began nearly twenty five years ago in a south London pub car park. A private detective, Danny Morgan, was killed with an axe. He ran Southern Investigations with his business partner Jonathan Rees. Rees, who ran a corrupt network of police officers he'd met through his membership of

the Masons, was jailed in 2000 for trying to plant cocaine in a custody battle.

There have been five failed prosecutions for the murder so far, the most recent in March brought public attention to Rees's relationship with the *News of the World*. There is no doubt that there was significant police corruption in South London at the time, as it was not long after that Stephen Lawrence was murdered and the investigation botched by detectives connected to drug baron Clifford Norris, father of one of the accused.

When Brooks talked to shocked *News of the World* staff the day after the Murdochs announced it would close, she hinted that worse was to come. Worse than hacking into the phones of murder victims and their relatives, or soldiers killed in Afghanistan or Iraq? I can only speculate, but I suspect that the murder of Danny Morgan will be in the mix somehow. The sacked staff feel they are being punished for something others did. It's the same old story – those at the top are protected while those at the bottom get shafted. And if anyone from the top is going to suffer, it will be working class boy made good Andy Coulson. You have to wonder what Brooks has on the Murdochs.

I think there will be more revelations and they will hurt Murdoch and his company. It's amazing that the government still think they can push through his purchase of BSkyB. The gap left by the *News of the World* will be filled by other red tops, not anything with better politics. The week before it happened, News International registered domain names for The Sun on Sunday.

But at present we are just spectators in a spat among our rulers. There are no changes to the underlying structure of society. But a hint of how different things could be was when sub-editors on *The Sun* walked out, briefly, in support of their colleagues on the *News of the World*.





## FEEDBACK

## Too far left

My copy arrived two days after the closing date for copy.

I want to respond to page 13 of this [18th June] edition. Dave Douglass, is otherwise a fine man, but one would think that his article on the relaunch of a Bolshevik banner could have been politely re-directed to *The Morning Star*. If not that, then perhaps a warning could be placed on the front cover.

Marxists are long practised in varnishing their own history with heavy dollops of lacquer. And Douglass's article is a prime example of this practice. Where did Marx ever indicate that "the withering away of the state" was meant to be "in terms of days" following the revolution?

Douglass's article invites anarchists to attend a ceremony to celebrate a banner with a huge mug-shot of Lenin prominently displayed. There's even a hammer and sickle and the infamous red star in attendance. Symbols that carry the stench of murder, corruption and tyranny.

Our Anarchist ancestors must be turning in their mass graves. The last time Anarchist Flags were to fly in the Soviet Union was at Kropotkin's funeral in 1921. Many of the mourners were Anarchists who had been imprisoned by the Bolsheviks. Lenin agreed to release them, for the day, only after major appeals from foreign radical groups. In the meantime, Lenin's secret police, the CHEKA, was expanding hand over fist.

The notion that we should enter into 'debate' is not only insulting to the Anarchists who contributed their lives to the Russian Revolution, it is asking us to take part in proliferating a great lie.

Peter Good

## Scottish defiance

The resistance of Edinburgh's refuse workers continues amid fresh offensives from the city council. The dispute between the workers and the city council over proposed changes to working patterns, along with a significant wage cuts, started in 2009 as the city council

looked to cut wages to its entire manual workforce including road workers, street cleaners and gardeners.

Faced with the pay cut, along with a substantial change to working patterns, the refuse collectors of Edinburgh organised a work-to-rule and operated an overtime ban. Now, after almost two years of struggle, the workers feel it's time to step up the action, with threats coming from the council that 100 workers could be made redundant.

The latest move from the council has been to integrate trade and domestic waste, massively increasing the workload on the workforce without any increase in pay, whilst laying off over 20 temporary staff only to replace them with private contractors. Having been let down by Unite at every turn and facing more threats to their workload and working conditions, Edinburgh's refuse collectors are turning increasingly to self-organisation. The June/July issue of *Resistance* #133 is a special austerity issue of Anarchist Federation's free newssheet. <http://afed.org.uk/>

## Heckling Hereford

Long before posh toff David Cameron was going on about his 'big society', anarchists were making the argument that you don't need the government and state to run society, ordinary people can do it for themselves. And so it is that, after a long battle with Herefordshire Council, Dilwyn residents have decided to run their village school themselves.

Last year council bosses decided that Dilwyn Primary School was 'unsustainable' and would have to close despite various rescue plans including linking with St Mary's High School in Lugwardine. The local community are now working on plans for a free school run by volunteers.

As we've said previously, schools are an important hub of village life and even more so for a small village like Dilwyn. At a time when rural communities are being decimated by the dwindling agricultural industry and multinational companies sucking trade in to the towns and cities, it is vital that we do whatever it takes to preserve these communities.

Herefordshire Council, whilst paying its top boss more than the prime minister, look only at the balance sheet and see a school as unprofitable, taking in no account of its social value.

We support the efforts of Dilwyn's people in keeping their school open, but it is also vital that we continue to resist every closure. *Hereford Heckler* #20, downloadable from their website: <http://herefordheckler.wordpress.com>

## Ken Keating RIP

Just received sad news from Sean Keating from Salford: "RIP Ken Keating, 24/01/38 – 28/06/11, Legend, Friend, Father, Granddad. My dad Loved by many, hated by authority but respected by all. Safe journey to mum old timer x."

Ken was the prime mover in Ordsall Class War in the 1990s and i think it would be safe to say none of us had ever seen the likes of Ordsall Class War! There are others who knew Ken far better than me and i hope to be publishing their thoughts when they are ready. In the meantime best wishes to Sean and family.

Here's an account from Practical History of Ordsall Class War in July 1992: "On the Ordsall Estate in Salford (near Manchester), in the space of several days in the first week of July, fires were started at a council neighbourhood office, a housing office, a careers office, a Department of Health office, a MacDonald's restaurant, and several other buildings. Shots were fired at police vehicles and a petrol bomb thrown at a police station. Also in Salford, eight people in balaclavas attacked a police car that they had lured into an ambush by setting off an alarm. Local youths complained of police violence, with one saying: 'There's people who can't pay for electricity. And they're at home in bed, in the dark, and the door's kicked in and all they can see is big torches coming up the stairs and the Bill [the police] is saying Stay where you are or you'll get your heads blown off'."

Ian Bone

<http://ianbone.wordpress.com/>



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## GETTING ACTIVE

### PRISON NEWS

Three weeks after Venezuelan security forces stormed the El Rodeo prison complex near Caracas, ending a five-day siege in the El Rodeo I section, the battle to retake the smaller El Rodeo II [see previous Prison News column, 2nd July] continues to rage. We know that around 1,200 prisoners remain inside the single prison block and are refusing to surrender to the thousands of heavily armed security personnel surrounding them. Beyond that the picture remains confused, not least because the siege has been caught up in the unending battle between the Chavez government and his opponents who control large parts of the media. The former is blaming the media for playing up the crisis and are claiming that the opposition is manipulating the prison gangs that effectively run most Venezuelan prisons and who they blame for provoking the initial riot; whilst the opposition are criticising the government over their impotence in not ending the siege and general mismanagement of the country's prisons.

So, on one hand the authorities have tried to play down their problems: claiming that only two soldiers and one prisoner have died as a direct result of the military operation and, whilst there is still no official death toll, that four more have since died through infighting and one through diabetic complications (the local media claim that at least seven prisoners have died, some from exposure to the massive amounts of teargas fired into the prison). Running counter to this has been the claim that the vast majority of the siege prisoners are in fact being held hostage by 60 gang members armed with AK-47 assault rifles and even a 50mm anti-aircraft gun, who are refusing to surrender because they fear being transferred to other prisons where they might be killed by rival gangs.

Much is also being made of the large arsenal of weapons uncovered in El Rodeo I, with claims of up to 60 rifles and handguns, hand grenades and thousands of rounds of ammunition, along with large finds of mobile phones and drugs. The directors of both prisons have been arrested on drug and arms trafficking charges.

On the prisoners' side, they have been without water and electricity since the siege began and their food supplies are running out. Attempts by officially appointed intermediaries to get food and water into the prison were vetoed by the police, provoking clashes with prisoners' families who have been standing vigil outside since the siege began. Add to that the fact that prisoners entering the prison's courtyard, waving white flags and with hands above their heads and attempting to surrender, have been shot at and it appears that there is no clear plan on how to end the siege – it looks increasingly likely that it will only do so in a bloodbath.



● This year's **Anti-Racism World Cup** will take place, as it did last year, at Donegal Celtic FC in West Belfast from 22nd to 24th July. Last year's tournament involved over 500 local people and 100 international guests as teams travelled from across the world to play against teams from various ethnic minority groups and from local communities in Belfast and across Ireland. This year the organisers intend to bring more teams to the city, including for the first time a Palestinian youth team, and hopefully making it the largest anti-racist event in Ireland.

The tournament was established in 2007 by local activists in conjunction with international friends and comrades and launched by the late Bob Doyle who was a veteran of the Spanish civil war.

Also as part of the weekend of events there's a special discussion on the history of Anti-Fascist Action – as told in the Freedom Press publication, *Beating the Fascists*.

If your organisation would like to become part of the ARWC contact [stevearwc@hotmail.com](mailto:stevearwc@hotmail.com) or visit the website: <http://www.antiracismworldcup.net/>

● An official campaign, **Fortnum 145**, has been set up to support the protesters arrested during the occupation of Fortnum & Mason as part of the UK Uncut tax avoidance action on the 26th March TUC demonstration in central London. Activists charged with aggravated trespass were in court on 5th July where it is understood 13 will be put forward for trial in November. They all entered a plea of not guilty.

Already all the youth cases have been dropped by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), provoking calls from solicitors to

drop the charges against all the protesters.

A further 17 defendants are due to enter pleas on 25th July, and the other 109 cases are under review. "We expect there may be a significant reduction in the number of outstanding cases," a CPS spokesman said, bringing doubts on the legitimacy and legality of the arrests in the first place.

What has been made clear in court by the defendants barristers is the nature of the arrests being political rather than criminal, with evidence that the whole operation an intelligence gathering exercise.

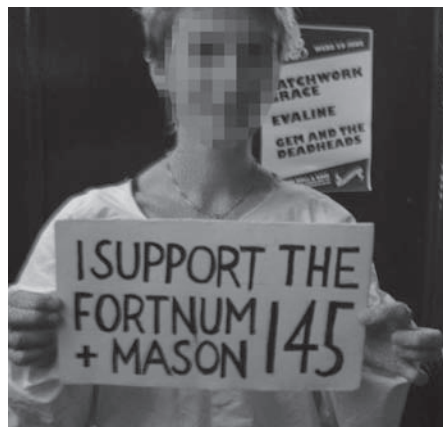
Contact the support group by sending an email to [support@fortnum145.org](mailto:support@fortnum145.org) or visit the website <http://fortnum145.org/>

● Basildon Council has served eviction notices on the families at Dale Farm and as of 27th August **Camp Constant** will be in operation. On Monday 4th July, some 90 families at Dale Farm, the UK's largest Traveller community, were given until midnight on 31st August to abandon their homes, or face their entire community being bulldozed.

Basildon Council have set aside over £18m for the eviction battle, which could last three weeks. It will be the biggest clearance of its kind, involving the ploughing up of 54 separate plots which were created out of a former concrete scrap-yard, which was purchased by the Travellers ten years ago. The campaign to defend Dale Farm starts now and a call out has gone out for support and solidarity for a traveller community under threat.

Email [savedalefarm@gmail.com](mailto:savedalefarm@gmail.com)

Website <http://dalefarm.wordpress.com/>





# Behind the Spanish barricades

## A brief introduction to the Spanish revolution

The 19th of July marks the 75th anniversary of the beginning of the Spanish Revolution. For a brief time, capitalism and the State were replaced by solidarity, mutual aid and respect for others. Workers and peasants, who were deeply influenced by anarchist ideas, ran society collectively and gained control over their lives, industry and land. A central part of the revolution was the struggle against a fascist attempt to take over Spain. We remember both the magnificent triumphs and tragedies of the Spanish revolution and attempt to learn from our comrades' mistakes.

Anarchist and syndicalist ideas had deep roots among Spanish peasants and workers. In 1911, a massive revolutionary trade union federation, the CNT (National Confederation of Labour) was formed. It had two aims; first, to fight the bosses with mass action in the daily struggle and, second, to make an anarchist revolution by organising the workers and the poor to seize back the land, factories and mines.

The CNT led many militant and successful struggles against the bosses and the government. By 1936 it was the biggest union in Spain, with nearly two million members. But the CNT was always democratic and, despite its giant size, never had more than one paid official.

The Anarchists did not restrict themselves to the workplace. They also organised an anarchist political group to work within the unions (the FAI) and organised rent boycotts in poor areas. The CNT itself included working peasants, farm workers and the unemployed. It even organised workers' schools!

In July 1936, fascists led by General Franco and backed by the rich and the Church, tried to seize power in Spain. The elected government (the Popular Front coalition of left-wing parties) was unable and unwilling to deal with the fascists. It even tried to strike a deal with the fascists by appointing a right-winger as Prime Minister. Why? Because they would rather compromise with the right wing and protect their wealth and power than arm the workers and the poor for self-defence.

Fortunately, the workers and the peasants did not wait around for the government to act. The CNT declared a general strike and organised armed resistance to the attempted take-over. Other unions and left-wing groups followed the CNT's lead.

In this way the people were able to stop the fascists in two-thirds of Spain. It soon became apparent to these workers and peasants that this was not just a war against fascists, but the beginning of a revolution! Anarchist influence was everywhere, workers'



militias were set up independently from the State, workers seized control of their workplaces and peasants seized the land.

There were many triumphs of the revolution, although we are only able to consider a few of the Spanish workers' and peasants' victories here. These included the general takeover of the land and factories.

Small peasants and farm workers faced extremely harsh conditions in Spain. Starvation and repression were a part of their daily lives and, as a result, anarchism was particularly strong in the countryside. During the revolution, as many as seven million peasants and farm workers set up voluntary collectives in the anti-fascist regions. After landowners fled, a village assembly was held. If a decision to collectivise was taken, all the land, tools and animals were pooled together for the use of the entire collective. Teams were formed to look after the various areas of work, while a committee was elected to co-ordinate the overall running of the collective. Each collective had regular general meetings in which all members participated. Individuals who did not want to join the collectives were not forced to. They were given enough land to farm on, but were forbidden to hire labourers to work this land. Most 'individualists' eventually joined the collectives when they saw how successful they were.

Anarchism inspired massive transformations in industry. Workers seized control over their workplaces, and directly controlled production by themselves and for the benefit of the Spanish workers and peasants. The tram system in Barcelona provided a shining example of just how much better things can be done under direct workers' control. On 24th July 1936, the tram crews got together and decided to run the whole system themselves. Within five days, 700 trams were in service instead of the usual 600. Wages were equalised and working conditions improved, with free medical care provided for workers.

Everyone benefited from the trams being under workers' control. Fares were reduced

and an extra 50 million passengers were transported. Surplus income was used to improve transport services and produce weapons for defence of the revolution. With the capitalist profit motive gone, safety became much more important and the number of accidents were reduced.

In the early stages of the revolution, the armed forces of the state had effectively collapsed. In their place, the trade unions and left-wing organisations set about organising the armed workers and peasants into militias. Overall, there were 150,000 volunteers willing to fight where they were needed. The vast majority were members of the CNT. All officers were elected by the rank-and-file and had no special privileges.

The revolution showed that workers, peasants and the poor could create a new world without bosses or a government. It showed that anarchist ideas and methods (such as building revolutionary unions) could work. Yet despite all this, the revolution was defeated. By 1939, the fascists had won the civil war and crushed the working-class and peasants with a brutal dictatorship.

Why did this happen? The revolution was defeated partly because of the strength of the fascists. They were backed by the rich, fascist Italy and Nazi Germany.

The CNT also made mistakes. It aimed for maximum anti-fascist unity and joined the Popular Front alliance, which included political parties from government and pro-capitalist forces. This required the CNT to make many compromises in its revolutionary programme. It also gave the Popular Front government an opportunity to undermine and destroy the anarchist collectives and the workers militias, with the Communist Party playing a leading role in these attacks at the behest of Stalinist Russia.

Nevertheless, anarchists had proved that ideas, which look good in the pages of theory books, look even better on the canvas of life.

Article courtesy of our comrades from Workers Solidarity Movement

## REVIEWS

WHAT'S ON  
JULY

■ **16th** Zero Carbon Britain, Nationwide Day of Action to promote the goal of a Zero Carbon Britain by 2030. Organise in your town or region, a cycle ride, a rally, a carnival, a fair... nationwide, for details/ideas email [phil.thornhill@campaigncc.org](mailto:phil.thornhill@campaigncc.org) or see <http://www.campaigncc.org/zcbd>.

■ **20th** All Star Comedy Fundraiser for No Sweat, in support of workers' rights worldwide, featuring Josie Long, Stewart Lee, Shappi Khorsandi, Robin Ince, Andy Zaltzman, Simon Munnelly and lots of friends at The Bloomsbury Theatre, 15 Gordon Street, London, WC1H 0AH from 7.30pm to 10.30pm, see [www.nosweat.org.uk](http://www.nosweat.org.uk)

■ **28th to 1st August** Peace News Summer Gathering, this hothouse of creativity will be at Crabapple Community, Berrington Hall, Berrington, Shropshire, SY5 6HA, for details see <http://peacenewscamp.info>.

## AUGUST

■ **10 to 15th** Earth First! Summer Gathering, workshops, skill sharing and planning action, plus low-impact living without leaders, meet people, learn skills, take action. Anarchist Teapot will provide vegan food for £5 a day, location in East Anglia (to be announced, see website), price £20-30 to cover costs, for further details email [efsummergathering@riseup.net](mailto:efsummergathering@riseup.net) or see [www.earthfirstgathering.org.uk](http://www.earthfirstgathering.org.uk).

■ **21st** London Vegan Festival, with many stallholders, nutrition information and an array of interesting talks and workshops, Kensington Town Hall, London, W8 7NX from 11am until 8pm, adm £2, email [robandal55@googlemail.com](mailto:robandal55@googlemail.com) or see [www.vegancampaigns.org.uk/festival](http://www.vegancampaigns.org.uk/festival) for more info.

■ **20th** Little London Fields free green festival from 12 noon until 9pm at London Fields, Hackney E8 3RH, for further details see [www.littlelondonfields.co.uk](http://www.littlelondonfields.co.uk).

■ **26th** The Outdoor Skillshare 2011, join us in beautiful rural South Lanarkshire for a weekend of skillsharing and workshops about outdoor life and resistance techniques – learn new skills, meet new people and share your experiences with others in South Lanarkshire, Scotland, for details email [outdoorskillshare@riseup.net](mailto:outdoorskillshare@riseup.net) or see <http://outdoorskillshare.noflag.org.uk/>

## SEPTEMBER

■ **13th** Disarm DSEi Day of Action, the world's largest arms fair, taking place at the ExCeL exhibition centre in London's Docklands from 13th to 16th, exists so that arms buyers and sellers can come together, network and make deals, see [www.dsei.org](http://www.dsei.org) for details of action.

■ **21st** Reclaim The Fields in solidarity with the people of Rosia Montana, a village in the Apuseni Mountains in Romania, under threat of being destroyed by a gold mining project in the name of profit, for details email [camp2011@reclaimthefields.org](mailto:camp2011@reclaimthefields.org) or see [www.reclaimthefields.org](http://www.reclaimthefields.org).

## FILM

## Hair

Milos Forman, 1979

As part of their 'Alternative Musicals' season, FACT\* have shown a number of rarely seen gems from various parts of the globe. Tonight's offering, the final picture of the season, was *Hair*, a Hollywood film based on the Broadway musical.

The film follows Claude Bukowski, played by John Savage, as he goes to New York for the first time. He has two days to kill before joining up to protect his country in Vietnam. During this time he meets a group of hippies who aggregate around a leader figure, Berger, who is played by Treat Williams. The word 'hippy' is now used as an insult, and even when the film was made, in 1979, they had clearly become a caricature, a symbol of something lost. It is this lost hope which is explored in this film.

These characters are clearly meant to be interpreted as hippies, with long flowing hair, flares and tie-dye clothing. They take drugs, are unashamedly open with their sexuality, and laugh at others for being 'uptight' when they don't understand their morality.

Hippies, yes, but not at all politically aware. When trying to convince Claude not to go to Vietnam, there is no mention of peace, of exploitation of American soldiers from poor backgrounds to further the cause of the rich who would never dream of giving up their lives, of indiscriminate killing of native Vietnamese, of colonialism. The best they can come up with is, 'Well if the boot was on the other foot, I wouldn't do it for you.'

Nor are they non-conformist. Claude actually spends one acid trip dreaming of marrying a rich girl. And unlike Bonnie and Clyde, they are not glamorous in their criminality. At one point they need some money, so Berger tries to con some rich people. He proves comically inept at this, and so where does he turn? To his mum.

The picture painted therefore is not of hippies as a revolutionary left, or of a group that is inspirational in any way, except perhaps its Caligula-like disregard for anything except immediate desires. This is a group of children, skipping their way through life with no care for anyone else. At one point Claude asks Berger, 'What did you do that for?' Berger's unfazed response is like his manifesto, 'What do you mean, man? Because it was fun.'

## QUIZ ANSWERS

1. They felt that their island was being taken over by "haughty, unpleasant strangers" as financial services captured the government of the tax haven.
2. Pope Boniface VIII proclaimed 1300 a year of Jubilee (the first Holy Year) and granted plenary indulgences (the remission of temporal punishment in Purgatory). The sale of these indulgences brought tens of



The film's many songs are rarely more than two minutes long; some are very good, most are very catchy and almost all are frankly hilarious. They openly take on, but brazenly refuse to explore, many issues that remain taboo thirty years later – sexuality, race, class. It is all part of an exhilarating journey through the morality of 1979 America, where the characters treat the taboos in the same way the film does; not as issues, but as games, or objects of mockery.

The real story is not in the issues or the taboos, but in what the characters can do with these games, whether they can take responsibility for each other at the same time as enjoying the freedoms they think they enjoy, and for which they exalt themselves over their less enlightened compatriots.

There are echoes of other films that explore the late 1960s and early 1970s here, such as *Easy Rider* and *Shampoo*. The latter made its point by explicit reference to the election of Reagan in 1981, whereas this film uses Vietnam as its political anchor. The thrust with all of them was not to reminisce of what might have been, of the potential of that 'great' period, but actually to mourn what was lost. The final scene reminds one of Warren Beatty in *Shampoo*, watching ruefully as Julie Christie drives off into the sunset with the man with the money, or of Peter Fonda in *Easy Rider* whispering wistfully, 'We blew it, man.'

Well, they blew it. What will we do?

Doctor Magiot

\* *Hair* was shown recently at FACT (Foundation for Art and Creative Technology) in Liverpool.

- thousands of pilgrims to Rome. It was here that Dante witnessed the priests at the main pilgrim centres literally raking the money off the altars.
3. Bill Clinton. Well, Kissinger should know?
4. The biography of Ammon Hennacy, a Christian anarchist, wobbly and Catholic Worker who died in 1970.



# Acts of propaganda

**Rich Cross on a new autobiography that is both enjoyably Crass and revealingly Ignorant**

Steve Ignorant, one of the founder members of the anarchist punk band Crass, wrote, recorded, toured and performed with the band throughout the eight intense years of its existence in the turbulent times of early Thatcherism. Although the role of singer was shared amongst many of the musicians in the band, Ignorant's signature vocal style did so much to define Crass's unmistakable and innovative (though since much copied) early sound.

More than twenty-five years on from the winding up of that band, Ignorant has authored an autobiography recounting his life before, during and after his time as a member of Crass. The result, *The Rest is Propaganda*, is an engaging and revealing read, offering numerous fresh insights into the 'Crass story', and a very personal coming-of-age tale which brings alive the era of Ignorant's own childhood and adolescence.

Throughout the band's life (and in the quarter-century since) Crass were routinely labelled as 'middle-class hippies'; as refugees from the counter-culture of an earlier era; and as privileged interlopers in the punk arena. Ignorant's life story punches holes through those perpetual allegations. He describes his childhood in Dagenham and his sometimes troubled family life; the stultifying atmosphere which surrounded him; and the debilitating lack of aspiration which appeared to imprison and limit so many of those in his immediate world. The early 1970s in the UK, as seen through young Ignorant's eyes, is a recognisably grim and constricting place in which the arrival of something as culturally challenging as 'punk rock' is long overdue. The story of how his life experiences led Ignorant to discover Dial House and to forge a long-term alliance with Penny Rimbaud, creating the persona of 'Steve Ignorant' in the process, makes for some compelling reading.

There is an honest sense of self-effacement as Ignorant recounts how he was swept up in the tidal wave which surrounded Crass and which swept them into the limelight. He does not attempt to downplay his sense of unconstrained excitement at the way that the world was opening up to him personally throughout this. Ignorant comes across as a sincere, committed and honourable bloke.

It is hard to overlook, however, how much Ignorant's current concern to justify his actions in taking Crass songs out on tour (and his frustrations with the conflict amongst ex-



Crass in 1984, Pete Wright (bass), Steve Ignorant (vocals), N.A. Palmer (guitar).

members over the re-releasing of the band's back catalogue on CD) shapes his account of the group's work and worth. It's safe to speculate that, had this book been written 10–15 years ago, some of the arguments put forward here, about the practice of anarcho-punk in particular, might have been somewhat different.

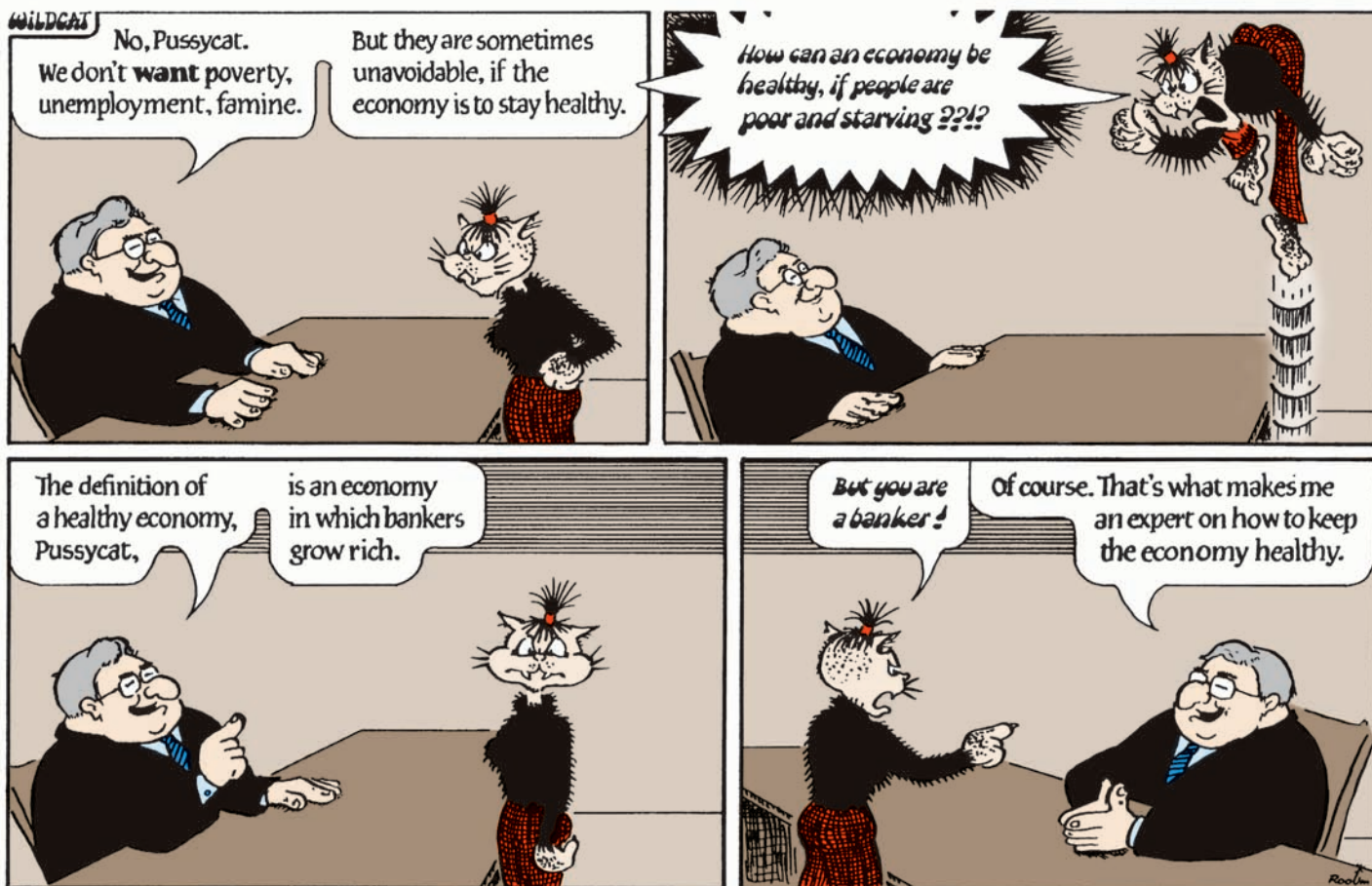
The title of Ignorant's book comes from the mouth of the anti-hero of Alan Sillitoe's classic 'kitchen-sink' tale *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*. Factory worker Arthur Seaton declares, in his defiance to the world: "I'm out for a good time – all the rest is propaganda". This choice is revealing, emphasising how far Ignorant is keen to restyle his former self as an 'angry young man' rather than as a strident, furrow-browed anarchist.

In that respect, *The Rest is Propaganda* is a very different sort of autobiography to that penned by Crass co-founder Rimbaud in the late 1990s. While Rimbaud is gloriously unrepentant about the ambitions of anarcho-punk, Ignorant is far more circumspect. Indeed, Ignorant is keen to set some distance between his account and the narrowly 'heroic' history of the band that he believes others have constructed. One of the things which *Shibboleth* and *Propaganda* share is a sense of the relentless intensity of Crass's work – as the band's popularity grew it risked becoming an all-consuming commitment. Ignorant began to resent this enforced selflessness and became determined to reassert his own personal priorities after Crass finished.

For several years now, he has become

something of a 'revisionist' historian of anarcho-punk. Ignorant is keen to stress the multiple shortcomings of the do-it-yourself (DIY) ethic, highlighting the chasm which could so often separate the aim from the reality. He recounts numerous instances of shambolic gigs, incompetent event organisers and miserable touring experiences. This might challenge an over-romantic, sanitised and problem-free history of punk DIY, but there is a real imbalance here. It is a shame that Ignorant struggles to recall an equal number of successful examples of collaborative anarchist effort; while the memories of bad food, broken promises and chaotic delivery loom so large. Ignorant has the least time for what he sees as the 'wilfully restrictive' internal culture of anarcho-punk and its reluctance to celebrate the idea of good, honest 'fun' (something that Ignorant has been anxious to reprioritise in his post-Crass life).

By definition, autobiography can only provide glimpses of the wider world through a personal prism, but one of the most striking things about *Propaganda* is just how little *politics* features: both that of the political context of the time, and of the anarchist response to it. The focus is on Ignorant's input into 'Crass the band' (the next tour, the next release) rather than on anarcho-punk 'the movement'. In large part this reflects Ignorant's interest in representing himself as that discontented and rebellious young man rather than as an anarchist militant with a Big A. This omission is frustrating and risks devaluing the political contribution which



## Review

◀ page 15

Ignorant himself brought to bear on Crass's work and which he shared joint responsibility for.

In recent years, the former unity of ex-Crass members has publicly unravelled. That schism is unlikely to be resolved any time soon – especially as the band's CDs are now being re-released in the face of opposition from some former members. There has never been any prospect of Crass reforming, and Ignorant's current tour appears to offer the final opportunity to see the band's anarchist anthems performed live by any of the 'original artists'. These shows have not been without controversy. With Ignorant mainly playing commercial venues, charging standard rock

ticket prices, and selling band merchandise, some of his dates have been picketed by punks protesting that his actions betray the legacy of Crass. Most of those in the boisterous, excitable audiences at these gigs appear to disagree. Ignorant pledges that, following a final show in London in November, he will draw a line under the Crass experience, and move on to new projects. He might find less closure than he expects. Debates about the merits of anarcho-punk are likely to pursue Ignorant long after he settles into being an angry older man.

Rich Cross is research and writing a book on the history of British anarcho-punk for AK Press.

Steve Ignorant (with Steve Pottinger), *The Rest is Propaganda*, London: Southern Records, 2010.

## THE QUIZ

1. John Christensen formed the Tax Justice Network after an encounter with Jersey residents. What was their complaint?
2. What is the origin of the term 'raking it in'?
3. According to Henry Kissinger, who didn't have the moral fibre to be a mass murderer?
4. What was the Book of Ammon?

Answers on page 14

*The Anarchist Quiz Book* compiled by Martin Howard, with illustrations by Paul Petard, £5 (post free) from [freedompress.org.uk](http://freedompress.org.uk) or from our bookshop at 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

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